

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010*

**Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser**

*February 4, 2010*

Hello, everybody! Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat, especially Tom McMillen and Dikembe Mutombo. *[Laughter]* Every time I stand next to them I look like a little kid. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank three people who are just extraordinarily important to the project of rebuilding our country and have just been great friends of mine, great friends of the Democratic Party—you already heard from one—please give it up for Governor Tim Kaine; our DNC finance chair, Jane Stetson, who's racking up a lot of frequent flier miles; and Andy Tobias, our DNC treasurer—hey, Andy.

It is great to see all of you here tonight, wonderful to see so many good friends, many of you who were there from the beginning of this campaign. And I want you to all know that I appreciate everything that you've done, not just for the campaign, but also what you've done for the country and what you've done for the party.

Many of you were invested in this campaign at the very beginning when nobody could pronounce my name. *[Laughter]* And you'd tell your friends, "There's this young guy, I really think he's got something." "What's his name?" "Barack Obama?" *[Laughter]* Yeah. So you had to confront a lot of skepticism, a lot of confusion. Some of you were involved in a campaign for the first time, and some of you got involved for the very first time in a very long time, because you believed that we were in a defining moment in our history and that your voice could make a difference.

Not a single day goes by where I don't think about all the time and the energy, the money, the commitment, the unyielding faith that you put into our campaign, because it wasn't just about winning an election; it was about changing a country.

Last year, we asked you to take on something new. We asked you to help us keep the promises that we made in the campaign, help to bring about the changes that we had talked about together. And a lot of you have worked hard to do that. You've continued to be engaged in education policy, in foreign policy, and helping us at a grassroots level and continuing to finance our ability to get our message out. And it matters. It's made the successes of the last year possible.

Sometimes I think we got so many things done so quick that people forgot. But let's just think about this: We upheld the principle of equal pay for equal work. We lifted the ban on stem cell research and restored science to its rightful place in America. We provided health care to 4 million children who now have it who didn't have it before. We passed the strongest veterans budget in decades. We protected families from getting ripped off by credit card companies and children from being targeted by big tobacco, and helped consumers deal with the twin plagues of mortgage fraud and predatory lending.

We appointed Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court. We passed a service bill named for Ted Kennedy that's giving young and old a chance to serve their country and their communities. We're working with Congress to finally repeal the law that denies gay Americans the right to serve the country they love because of who they are.

Oh by the way, and in the meantime, we prevented the worst financial crisis from getting even worse; turned the economy from contraction to expansion; made the largest investment in clean energy in history; the largest investment in education in decades; expanded the Pell grant program; dealt with a H1N1 virus on the side. *[Laughter]*

That's what your support has helped us do at home. Abroad, we've begun a new era of engagement. We're working with our partners to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, seeking a world free of them. We're working with other nations to confront climate change. We are now a leader and not a follower in that critical mission. We banned torture. We're rebuilding our military. We're reaffirming our alliances. We've begun to leave Iraq to its own people, as I committed to doing in the campaign. And we've charted a new way forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We're making progress every single day in taking the fight to Al Qaida and across the globe. And I went to Cairo on behalf of the American people to begin a new dialog with the Muslim world.

We're living up to our obligations as a wealthy nation, helping to promote food security around the world, helping to deal with diseases around the world. We're living up to a moment that demands American leadership by standing with the people of Haiti as we speak.

So in ways large and small, we've begun to deliver on the change that we talked about, the change that you believed in and that you campaigned hard for. But the reason that you and I are here tonight is because we're not done. We've got a lot more work to do.

As I said, the day we took office, we confronted a financial system on the verge of collapse; we were losing 700,000 jobs per month; a \$1.3 trillion deficit; two wars that, frankly, had not been paid for and were costly in every sense of the word. A lot of the solutions we proposed, the decisions we took, they weren't quick, they weren't easy, and they weren't popular. But we decided we were going to go govern, we were going to put politicking on hold to get this country out of the mess it was in.

I mentioned this to a group I spoke to earlier. You know, pundits act surprised about the fact that we spent so much political capital. Well, you know, I didn't get elected to play it safe. And I didn't govern, and I don't govern, by checking the polls every few days. I know that's the habit in Washington, but that's not the obligation I owe the American people; that's not the promise I made to you. And because we took bold and swift and coordinated action, we can stand here today and say we averted another depression. We broke the back of the recession. The economy is growing again.

So the worst of the storm has passed. But, as all of you know, the devastation remains. We've got 10 percent unemployment. Many of you watching at home, as you go around the country and your individual communities, you see the stores shuttered and the foreclosed businesses; friends and neighbors, family members who still can't find work. This is on top of a decade that had been tough for middle class families all across the country. They hadn't seen their incomes go up in years. Their costs skyrocketing at the same time as their wages were stagnant.

For 2 years, I heard stories all across the country, everywhere I go. I heard stories about people trying their best to hold on; a family sitting around the kitchen table wondering if they were going to be able to retire on schedule, if they were going to be able to finance a college education for their kids, wondering when would health care costs stop climbing, when would their premiums start stabilizing. And people started expressing doubts about whether the dream that generations built and defended, the American Dream, was slipping away.

That's the reason I ran for President. That's the reason you supported me. And that's why we are going to continue to do everything we can to create an economy that hasn't just recovered back to the status quo, but an economy where hard work is valued and responsibility is rewarded, and where businesses are hiring and wages are rising, and where our middle class is getting stronger and more secure.

Now, our most urgent task is job creation. That was our number-one priority last year and our number-one priority this year. And the first task was to make sure the economy is growing. It is growing. But we've got to do more. So we're going to give tax breaks and loans to small businesses to help them hire new workers and raise their wages and invest in new plants and equipment. We're going to put even more Americans to work on clean energy facilities and upgrading our infrastructure to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

We're going to create incentives for consumers to make their homes more energy efficient, creating jobs and saving families money. And we're going to look at our Tax Code, because it's time we ended practices like giving tax breaks to companies that ship jobs overseas instead of investing in companies that are creating jobs right here in the United States of America.

But the truth is, these steps alone won't make up for 7 million jobs that have been lost over the last 2 years. They're not going to, alone, provide the economic security that's been dwindling for middle class families over the last decade. The only way we do that is to lay a strong foundation for growth over the long term. And the things that we talked about during the campaign are the things that still need to be done. They've been put off by Washington for too long.

And this is where change gets hard. Change is easy if you're just talking about tinkering around the edges. Change is harder when you actually dig in and try to deal with the structural problems that have impeded our progress for too long. This is where we run headlong into the lobbyists and the special interests and the bitterness and misinformation that characterizes so much of our politics, which means that some of you may be feeling discouraged, because it feels like things have taken longer than you might have expected.

Well, don't be discouraged. I'm not discouraged. I knew this was going to take a long time, but I knew the fight was worth it. And we've got to keep up on this fight. The forces of the status quo, they may not give an inch, but I don't give an inch either. And you shouldn't give an inch either. We're not—[applause]. We didn't come this far to put things off, or to play it safe, or to take the easy road. That wasn't why we were elected. We came here to solve problems for the next generation, not for the next election.

That means opening up this Government to the people. That's why we post all our visitors online. That's why we've excluded lobbyists from policymaking jobs and seats on boards and commissions. That's why I've called on Congress to put their earmarks online so everybody can see what's going on. That's part of the change that we promised.

We've got to change the tone of Government and politics here in Washington and all across America. I'm not going to give up on that either. You know, the American people are right to be frustrated about a Washington where every day is Election Day and the basic theory is, "If you lose, I win," where we're not measuring success by what we're doing for the American people, but how we look in the latest Gallup. No wonder people are frustrated.

That's why I went to the House Republican caucus the other day. We had a good discussion—[*laughter*]—about the challenges that are facing the American people, our ideas to solve them. That was good for the country. It's good for our democracy. I had fun. [*Laughter*]

Now, there are some issues that Democrats and Republicans aren't going to agree on, and that's okay. Vigorous debate is healthy. We're going to tussle from time to time. And you know what? There may be some issues that we do agree on, or at least we say we agree on. And we have to test whether or not people are serious. So I told my Republican friends I want to work together with them where I can, and I meant it, because I don't want to just score political points. I've got time to campaign down the road. In the meantime, there's a lot of work that we've got to get done together. And we can get a lot done together.

And I told them I will also call them out if they say they want to work on something and then when I offer a hand I get nothing in return. The American people have to understand that. The old playbook of just blocking everything, I understand that's easier than actually doing something, and sometimes it may be more politically effective, but that's not what's going to move our country forward.

That's why I'm here. That's why you joined our campaign. That's what you've helped deliver over the last year. That's why I need your help now. That's why Tim and everybody in the party needs your help now, because you know as well as anyone that change doesn't come without a fight. We've got some fights to wage.

We've got some fights to make sure that we're sparking innovation and igniting a clean energy sector where American workers are making solar panels and wind turbines and cutting-edge batteries for the new plug-in hybrid that leads on clean energy, because the economy that leads on clean energy, I believe, is going to lead the global economy. And I want America to be that nation.

We're going to keep fighting to make sure that America has the best education possible for every child. And we're going to reward success through our Race to the Top program. We want every child to meet their potential, and that's why we're going to make sure that young people all across America can afford college without going broke. That's a priority. We can do that. And we could do it this year.

We're going to keep fighting for commonsense rules of the road for Wall Street. And I want to be clear—there's a lot of talk about Wall Street, Main Street—we need a financial sector that works. That's a priority. We need businesses that are thriving, and they've got to raise capital; that will help them hire workers. So there's no separation between our financial system and the real economy. That's part of what this crisis has reminded us. But we've got to ensure that our economy isn't brought to its knees by outdated and antiquated financial rules and the irresponsibility of a few.

And that's why I expect Democrats and Republicans to want to make sure that we don't find ourselves in this same situation again. That's why we have to have financial regulatory reform. And, yes, that is why we're going to fix the health care system, a health care system that too often works for insurance companies better than it does for individual Americans.

And again, I didn't take this on because it was easy. I got David Axelrod; he does all the polls. He whispers in my ear, "Man, this health care thing is hard." [*Laughter*] I am an amateur historian, so I know that seven Presidents, starting with Teddy Roosevelt, couldn't get this done. We understood this was going to be hard.

But I took it on not for its political value; I took it on because families are dealing with skyrocketing premiums and skyrocketing out-of-pocket costs and insurance companies that routinely deny coverage because of preexisting conditions, or drop people altogether when they get sick. We took it on because the costs were killing small businesses and creating an uneven playing field for our international companies, and it was eating into workers' take-home pay and canceling raises. And we took it on because it's the single best way—in fact, the only way—that we are actually going to get control of our Federal budget.

So when I hear "deficit hawks"—quote, unquote—out there who say they want to control the Federal budget and aren't willing to do a darn thing about the skyrocketing costs of health care, I get a sense they're not entirely on the level. Because our proposal for health care reform, according to the Congressional Budget Office, would bring it down by \$1 trillion over the next two decades. And even in Washington that's a lot of money.

I took it on because every single day, 15,000 Americans join the tens of millions who don't have health insurance, and 18 million—18,000 Americans die because of the lack of health insurance.

That's what we campaigned on. That's what we're working to get it done, with Democrats and with Independents and with Republicans. We want to bring down costs and end the worst insurance practices and finally give every American a chance to have the security of quality, affordable health care.

I am not going to walk away from those fights, and I don't expect you will either. You've come this far. I mean, the odds were a lot less that I'd ever be standing here than they are that we can solve some of these big problems. I mean, think about it. Tim was—when Tim endorsed me in Richmond, first endorsement I got outside of Illinois of any elected official—here he is, newly minted Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia—there was one thing that was clear, and that is he was term limited. *[Laughter]*

But don't you guys—you remember this. Nobody gave us a chance. This campaign was declared dead—what?—10 times. *[Laughter]* You know, the same folks who are now writing about "what next," and "what's happened to the Obama," these are the same folks who were writing about how he doesn't stand a chance; how after New Hampshire, that was it; after Pennsylvania, that was it, right? We went through this. And they were saying your faith was misplaced and that you've set your sights too high and your hope is naive and Washington won't change. And now all of them are feeling like, "See, we told you, Washington doesn't change." And they're feeling kind of self-satisfied about the fact that we haven't yet gotten health care done.

Well, let me tell you something. You didn't listen to those voices then. Your voice proved them wrong. You proved that nothing can stop the power of millions of people who want to see an America that's living up to its values and its ideals. That's what you did. And that's what I'm asking you to do again.

This is an extraordinary moment. I want to remind you, we don't quit. And I don't quit. And we are going to bring about the changes that you believe in and I believe in, and that, ultimately, will help our children and grandchildren believe as they grow up an America in which everybody's got a decent shot at life, in which we're leading in innovation, in which we're proud of our foreign policy.

That's what we were fighting for then. That's what we're fighting for now. We've taken some good steps. We got many miles to go on this journey. I hope you join me.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:05 p.m. at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. In his remarks, he referred to former Rep. Charles T. "Tom" McMillen; Dikembe Mutombo, former center, Houston Rockets; and Democratic National Committee Chairman Timothy M. Kaine. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 5.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Democratic National Committee fundraiser.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Axelrod, David M.; Kaine, Timothy M.; McMillen, Charles T. "Tom"; Mutombo, Dikembe; Sotomayor, Sonia; Stetson, Jane; Tobias, Andrew.

*Subjects:* Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Afghanistan : U.S. policy review; Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, proposed repeal; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Nonproliferation efforts; Budget, Federal : Deficit; Business and industry : Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility, and Disclosure Act of 2009; Business and industry : Domestic investment, proposed tax breaks for; Business and industry : Facility and equipment purchases, tax incentives; Business and industry : Small and minority businesses; Business and industry : Small-business hiring incentives, proposed; Civil rights : Wage equality; Congress : Bipartisanship; Congress : Earmark reform; Congress : House of Representatives :: Republican caucus; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Developing countries : Food aid programs, U.S.; Developing countries : Health and medical care, promotion efforts; Diseases : Global influenza outbreak; District of Columbia : Democratic Party events; Economy, national : Financial regulations, modernization efforts; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : Postsecondary education :: Pell grants; Education : School improvement and renovation; Education, Department of : Race to the Top Fund; Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Employment and unemployment : Outsourcing to foreign countries; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment rate; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies; Energy : Alternative energy products and technologies, U.S. production; Energy : Energy efficiency, tax incentives; Energy : Energy-efficient homes and buildings; Environment : Climate change ; Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act of 2009; Foreign policy, U.S. : Diplomatic efforts, expansion; Government organization and employees : Role and disposition of lobbyists, limits on; Haiti : Earthquake, damage and recovery efforts; Haiti : U.S. assistance; Health and Human Services, Department of : State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP); Health and medical care : Cost control reforms; Health and medical care : Employer-based health insurance coverage; Health and medical care : Insurance coverage and access to providers; Housing : Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act of 2009 ; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Judiciary : Supreme Court :: Associate Justice; Science and technology : Stem cell research; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Terrorism : Terrorists :: Interrogation procedures; Transportation : Highway system, modernization efforts; Veterans Affairs, Department of : Funding; Virginia : Former Governor; White House Office : Visitor logs, public release.

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